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ABSTRACT

This report of the National Advisory Council, a committee of 21 persons from labor, management, and education, outlines the problems associated with the present system of financing vocational education and presents recommendations for overcoming these problems. The problems identified were: (1) Voters are more willing to support educational programs benefiting all students, and the costs of vocational education programs are often more expensive than a college preparatory or liberal arts course, (2) The federal and state assistance intended to be an incentive often becomes a ceiling because many school districts provide vocational programs only when they are reimbursed, (3) A tight definition of vocational education often becomes a straight jacket, (4) The state plan is not a viable planning instrument, and (5) The Federal Government has little power to affect the achievement of national objectives. To alleviate these problems, the council recommends that a new technique in federal-state relationships be adopted in which a support component, comprising 75 percent of the funds, would come from Congress, and the remaining 25 percent would be an incentive component to be allocated by the Office of Education in proportion to each state's efforts to achieve the national objective. Other recommendations are included. (SB)

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FOURTH REPORT

National Advisory Council on Vocational Education

Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 Public Law 90-576

January 16, 1971

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The National Advisory Council on Vocational education was created by the Congress through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968. It is composed of 21 persons, appointed by the President from diverse backgrounds in labor, management and education. It is charged by law to advise the Commissioner of Education concerning the operation of vocational education programs, make recommendations concerning such programs, and make annual reports to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare for transmittal to Congress.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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January 16, 1971

Honorable Elliott Richardson
Secretary
Department of Health, Education
and Welfare
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In its three previous reports, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education has discussed some of what it considers the most pressing problems in vocational education: attitude, curriculum, Office of Education organization, coordination with manpower programs, and services to the disadvantaged. In this, its Fourth Report, the Council deals with one of the major causes of these problems. We have allowed to develop in this country a system of financing vocational education which precludes the creation of imaginative career education programs in the public schools. Many of the complaints so frequently heard about the quality of vocational education courses, facilities, and faculties can be traced to a funding system which so narrowly defines what can be funded as vocational education that it excludes new and often needed forms of career education. The enclosed Report outlines the problems associated with our present system of financing vocational education and presents the Council's recommendations for overcoming these problems.

The Council believes that the new financing system it proposes in this Report concurs fully with the Administration's present emphasis on alternative methods of delivering funds to the states. If adopted, the new system outlined in this Report would allow for the development of career education which responds solely to the needs of the students, rather than to short-sighted definitions and financial restrictions. Moreover, the Council is convinced that its recommended method of financing would allow for the achievement of local, state and national objectives in vocational education and would, in this way, contribute greatly to developing the potential of individual students and to meeting the needs of the nation's economy and society as a whole.

The Council looks forward to working closely with you in developing the details of this new system and in working toward the improvement of all aspects of vocational education in the country.

Sincerely,

Hugh Calkins

Hugh Calkins
Chairman

Enclosure

FOURTH REPORT

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

There is a fiscal crisis in education in America. The need is urgent to replace extensive reliance on property taxes paid by home owners with greater reliance on broadly based taxes, and to revise the formulas by which state and federal funds for general education support are allocated to local schools and colleges. In this report the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education turns its attention to five unique problems of financing and planning vocational and technical education. They are at the root of much of what needs attention in career education today.

I. PROBLEMS

A. The Local Voter and Differential Costs. The local voter is much more willing to support educational programs which affect all students equally, than educational programs which benefit only some of the students. The long history of inadequate attention to the handicapped and the disadvantaged eloquently testifies to this fact. Vocational-technical education frequently requires start-up costs of building conversion and equipment, supplies, smaller classes, and additional staff to find and supervise job stations, counsel students, and place them in jobs. These costs combine to make most career education more expensive than a college preparatory or liberal arts course. Local school and college officials, hard pressed to balance the budget and required to turn to the voter every few years for operating funds, find it nearly as difficult to allocate local

resources to defray these differential costs as to meet the costs of educating the handicapped and disadvantaged.

B. The Incentive Often Becomes a Ceiling. While the Advisory Council strongly supports federal and state assistance to local educational institutions in meeting the differential costs of career education, it has found that what is intended, and required, as an incentive often becomes a ceiling. The Council knows of few school districts with more vocational education classes than are reimbursed by the state government for partial or total cost. Most school districts will expand the number of general and college preparatory classes they offer to meet demand; however, they will meet the demand for training in careers only if a higher level of government provides a special subsidy.

C. The Incentive Often Becomes a Strait Jacket. When the costs of any program are shared among different levels of government, each level tries to shift to the other levels as much of the cost burden as possible, and to repel the efforts of the other levels to shift costs to it. State governments defend themselves against the efforts of local governments to shift vocational education costs to the state level by rigorously enforcing a tight definition of vocational education. Typically, the definitions of Vocational Education now used in the United States speak in terms of inputs. One example is to specify that vocational education funding can only be received for a welding class conducted with equipment that meets state standards, in a classroom that meets state standards, by a teacher who meets state standards, to a prescribed

number of students enrolled in the eleventh or twelfth grades. Such a definition often becomes a strait jacket. A school cannot offer welding to seventeen year old boys in the tenth grade, subcontract welding instruction to a welding shop in the neighborhood, or teach arithmetic or reading as a part of the welding course, because such irregularities violate the definition and impair the subsidy.

D. The "State Plan" Is Not a Viable Planning Instrument. At the heart of the process of allocating federal money for vocational-technical education is a document called the "State Plan." While its existence represents a significant advance over the unplanned character of most education, in many states it falls far short of presenting what the objectives of the state are, how the state proposes to achieve them, and how long it expects that to take. Rigidly structured by the federal rules and regulations, the plan serves as a compliance document with specifications so meticulously detailed that its annual preparation becomes a chore for the expert in grantsmanship and its review in the Office of Education has literally been entrusted to secretaries.

E. The Loss of Federal Initiative. The national objectives in vocational education cry out to be accomplished. Vocational education should be accessible to all persons who desire it; the "general" program which still survives in many high schools should be eliminated so that all students are prepared either for a job and/or for further education; the new careers in health services, fluid power, horticulture, aviation, data processing, appliance repairing,

and the like need to be established; girls need to be admitted to many industrial programs; career training institutions should take the responsibility for job placement of students; vocational education needs to be diffused through the curriculum; priority must be given to the disadvantaged, both urban and rural; vocational orientation in the elementary years must be expanded. Under the 1968 Amendments to the Vocational Education Act, the federal government has little power to affect the achievement of these national objectives. The states have complied with the minimum standards and set-asides required by that legislation, and have met the required 50-50 matching by ratios of 500% or more. Additional federal dollars under those Amendments will strengthen vocational education on its present course, but will not affect its course.

II. NACVE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. New Funding and Planning Technique. The Administration should prepare and the Congress adopt a new technique in federal - state financial relationships. Federal assistance for vocational-technical education should be divided into two parts: a support component, comprising about 75 percent of available funds, and an incentive component constituting the remaining 25 percent. The basic support component would be allocated among the states under the same formula as existing basic grants, subject to compliance by the states with the more important of the minimum conditions now set forth in the 1968 Amendments. The remaining 25 percent of

the funds should be allocated by the Office of Education as an incentive to encourage states to pursue national objectives effectively. This allocation should be made by using a point system under which each national objective would be accorded an appropriate number of points and a state would be awarded a larger or smaller portion of those points in proportion to its efforts to achieve that objective. A system for reviewing the Commissioner's determination as to the number of points to be awarded should be established.

To confirm that the states are in compliance with the minimum requirements for the basic grant, a simple compliance document would be used, in which the states would merely certify that they are in compliance with the federal requirements. To qualify for incentive grants, the states would in addition be required to submit, at the begining of each three or five year planning period, a plan specifying what objectives the state proposed to pursue, what steps it proposed to take to achieve each objective, and, in quantified terms, how much progress it expected to make. At the conclusion of each planning period the state would furnish an evaluation document in which, using sample school attendance area data, as well as state figures, it would report upon its progress in achieving the objectives of the plan.

This proposal does not constitute an improper interference by the federal government with the prerogatives of the states. If the Congress provides 75 percent of the federal grant with few strings attached, it surely can properly allocate more incentive money to those states which are more actively pursuing national objectives than to those which are not.

B. National Fiscal Objectives for Vocational Education. Among the national objectives specified as entitling a state to a larger incentive grant should be some crucial fiscal objectives. Among them we recommend the following:

1. A state should be rewarded if it authorizes alternative delivery systems of vocational-technical education which permit administrators to escape the program strait jacket we have described. A school which is willing to have the benefits and the costs of appropriately monitored innovative vocational education programs should be entitled to the same federal and state assistance as a conventional program reaching comparable results with comparable costs.

2. A state should receive a larger incentive grant if its vocational education assistance formula encourages school districts to expand their vocational offerings without imposing a ceiling on the number which can be created. In most cases, a proportionate reduction of dollars per class is a better way to handle an unexpected rapid expansion than a limitation on the number of classes to be subsidized.

3. Career education funds should be allocated among local districts by an equalization formula which takes into account the total tax effort of the districts. Total tax effort includes municipal as well as school taxes.

Defining tax effort in terms of school taxes alone is in most states a tragic error contributing substantially to the fiscal breakdown of many central city and rural school systems.

4. A state should earn an additional allocation if if appropriately recognizes the special problems of career education in rural areas, by supporting, for example, residential vocational-technical schools.

5. It is a national objective that states abolish "general" education and redirect those resources to prepare students for a job entry skill in a career pattern. Using the incentive portion of the federal vocational-technical grant-in-aid to achieve this objective is an extraordinarily efficient use of federal funds.

6. A state should be encouraged by the federal incentive grant to evaluate its career education programs. Much better data than is now available must be obtained if planning is to be effective.

C. National Support for Effective Planning. Finally, the NACVE recommends that federal grant-in-aid funding provide adequate, consistent categorical support for research, curriculum development, planning and evaluation. These activities will be neglected at the local level unless the states support them; they will be neglected at the state level unless the federal government supports them. Their effectiveness is destroyed by stop-and-go financing.

Improving the administration of education is an important national objective. To achieve it, the federal government should

(1) clearly articulate the national objectives; (2) provide basic support to the states in consistent amounts known well in advance on a certification of compliance with minimum conditions; (3) provide incentive support in amounts known well in advance in proportion to state effort to achieve the national objectives as revealed by thoughtful multi-year plan and evaluation documents; and (4) provide consistent and adequate support for state-level research, development, planning and evaluation.

If the Administration and the Congress will take these steps in 1971, the decade of the seventies will be a period in which America moves rapidly toward its goal that every citizen has an opportunity to acquire the self-respect that comes from being self-supporting in a career in which the future can be brighter than the past.

Respectfully submitted,

Hugh Calkins

Hugh Calkins, Chairman

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January 16, 1971

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